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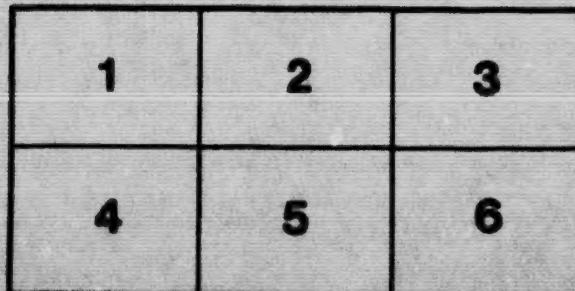
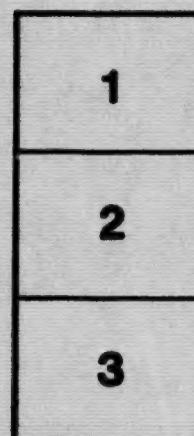
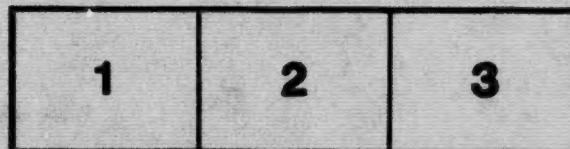
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# THE NAVAL QUESTION

SPEECH DELIVERED BY

MR R. L. BORDEN, M.P.

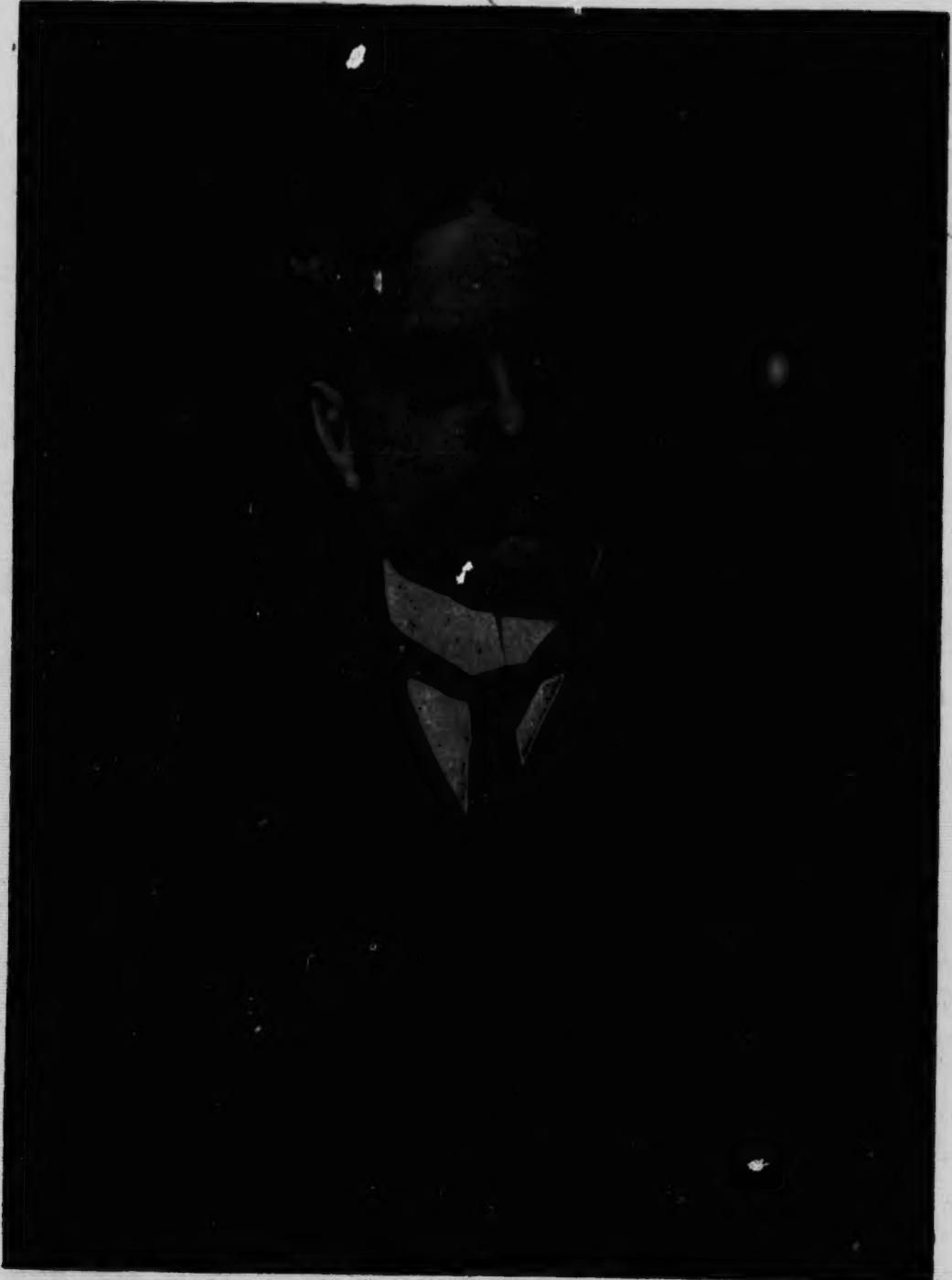
3RD FEBRUARY 1910

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R.L. Baden

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Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I join most sincerely in the regret which has been expressed by the Prime Minister at the continued illness of the hon. the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, which prevents him from addressing the House upon the second reading of this Bill. However, my right hon. friend the Prime Minister has taken up that task. He has addressed to the House a very long speech, more than three-fourths of which had absolutely nothing to do with the subject which is now occupying the attention of the House and of the country. The right hon. gentleman seems to think, for some reason, that this is the year 1837. This is not the year 1837, and we are not engaged to-day in a discussion as to whether this country shall have autonomous rights and privileges. That question was settled 75 years ago. It is significant that when my right hon. friend finds himself in circumstances of peculiar difficulty with his own party, he always goes back to the days of 1837, and quotes to us, not only from the speeches of Lord Durham, but from the eloquent orations of Mr. Lafontaine and Mr. Baldwin. It is an old piece of tactics on the part of my right hon. friend; its use indicates that he is in a tight place, and I sincerely condole with him to-day upon the circumstances in which he finds himself. Why, Sir, he told us in the first place that he had an absolutely united party behind

him; and then, not very long afterwards, we found him dealing at great length with criticisms which had been made upon his course in the province of Quebec, and presumably by members of his own party.

The right hon. gentleman has seen fit to introduce a great subject most profoundly affecting not only Canada, but the whole empire, in a highly controversial and partisan spirit. He has indulged in what he calls a retrospective glance, accompanied by observations more or less dignified as to the supposed divisions in the ranks of the Conservative party. Well, Sir, there is no attempt to gag any one in the Conservative party, and there never will be, I hope.

But my right hon. friend has invited some remarks which otherwise I should not have felt impelled to make to-day; he has given us a retrospective glance, but his retrospective glance does not include some periods that perhaps he might be well inclined to forget; and indeed he has conveniently forgotten them to-day. He speaks of criticism from the province of Quebec. Sir, I venture to tell him this, that if he has received any criticism from men who, in the past at least, have been his followers in the province of Quebec, that criticism and that feeling are due to himself more than to any other man in Canada.

A retrospective glance seems to suit the humour of the right hon. gentleman to-day. Well, Sir, what was his own aspiration in the days of 1891 and 1892? His teaching in regard to this matter in the province of Quebec was summarized in his own hearing, in this House, only three years ago, by one of his own followers, and it was in words which are to be found in 'Hansard' of the 29th of November, 1906. It is the language of Mr. Bourassa, a disciple and follower of the right hon. gentleman; and here is Mr. Bourassa's language, which was not called in question by the right hon. gentleman at the time it was uttered:

Well, sir, what was the language of Mr. Laurier in Boston, in 1891: that Canada would never consent to Imperial federation even on commercial lines alone, because the consequence would be the participation of Canada in British wars, and Canada would never consent to participate in British wars.

Was that or was that not the teaching of my right hon. friend in 1891 and 1892? Does he now deny that summary of his position which was given by his own follower in this House and which was not denied by him at that time? Well Sir, we may go on to a little further retrospect since my right hon. friend is anxious for retrospects. Here is his own language recorded in the pages of 'Hansard' and I am anxious to observe whether hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House who applauded with such vigour the speech just delivered will applaud the words which I shall proceed to quote, used by the right hon. gentleman as the leader of the Liberal party in this country, which as he declares has an absolutely consistent record in this matter.

I hold out to my fellow countrymen the idea of independence, but, whenever the day comes, it must come by the consent of both countries, and we shall continue to keep the good feeling and the good-will of the mother land. If we are true to our record, we will again exhibit to the world the unique, the unprecedented example of a nation achieving its independence by slow degrees, and as naturally as the severing of the ripe fruit from the parent tree.

Then further, in the course of the same remarks—

An hon. MEMBER. What date?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. 'Hansard' 1892, page 1142. If any hon. member desires to examine the remarks of the right hon. gentleman he will find them there, and further at page 1143:

Is there a Canadian anywhere who would not hail with joy the day when we would be deprived of the services of British diplomacy?

As he has invited controversy with respect to the matter, although I had hoped that he would have elevated the discussion somewhat more above controversial lines, I have to tell him that in my judgment, since he has held the reins of government, British diplomacy has more than once got this country out of difficulties in which it has been involved by the blundering of himself and his colleagues. Further, at page 1144, since my right hon. friend desires a retrospect, I find him using this language on the same occasion:

The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) no doubt would prefer an English shilling to a Yankee dollar: but for my part I am differently constituted. I am ready any day, whether I am charged with annexation or not, to take a Yankee dollar in preference to an English shilling. . . . I have again and again repeated that the goal of my aspiration is the independence of Canada, to see Canada an independent nation in due course of time.

Well, my right hon. friend may have recanted that opinion. I am not aware that he has ever publicly recanted that aspiration and it would seem to me, having regard to some of the provisions of this Bill that he has not done so; and, if I may indulge in the tactics of my right hon. friend, rumour reaches us from some sources in the country that this very measure now presented to the House in so eloquent a speech is being held out as an important step in the direction of that independence which was at one time at least the aspiration of my right hon. friend.

Now, Sir, the right hon. gentleman declared to us that he has been told from some source in criticism of this measure that aid should be given by Canada to the mother country in respect of naval defence by means of annual contributions. I have already expressed my opinion on that point, and as I spoke in this House at great length on the first reading of this Bill I shall be enabled to curtail my remarks to-day. As far as I am concerned, while the system of annual contributions might be best, and, no doubt, would be best from the purely strategical standpoint, I firmly believe that no such system could be adopted, but that eventually and permanently the basis upon which Canada must contribute to the defence of the empire will be by employing our own material, our own resources, our own men, and the skill and courage of our own people.

But, Sir, we have to consider to-day some of the propositions of the government not only as embodied in this Bill, but as embodied in the speech of my right hon. friend. He told us on the first reading of this Bill that Canada must be at war when the empire is at war. Any man who has the slightest acquaintance with international law knows that that is absolutely the case. Yet, my right hon. friend has somewhat receded from that opinion to-day, because he has told us that

under conceivable circumstances the rest of the empire might be at war while Canada was at peace. Such a proposition is absolutely impossible. So long as Canada remains in the empire, Canada is at war when the empire is at war. So long as the Empire's flag floats above Canada, Canada is at war when that flag is attacked. The moment a shot is fired or a blow is struck at that flag, Canada is at war with the nation or country which fires that shot or strikes that blow. In view of the fact that the right hon. gentleman recedes, as I understood him to recede to-day, from the position which he took on the first reading of the Bill, we must understand that some very strong compulsion has urged him to take that course, and that difficulties within the ranks of his own party have compelled him to recede from what was in the first place the true and correct declaration of the position of this country.

I shall not stop to dwell upon the argument of my right hon. friend based upon the authority of that great constitutional work, "Quentin Durward," as to the exact similarity of meaning between 'sovereign' and 'suzerain.' Every one knows that the term 'suzerain' is a term which has come down to us from the old feudal days. I have not had an opportunity of examining the quotation, but I would not be very much surprised to find that my right hon. friend, in consulting this eminent constitutional work, has, after all, misread it and that its authority might be turned against him.

Let us look for a moment at the position of affairs to-day. The question which we have to consider is undoubtedly a very important one. It is the question of organizing the forces of the empire for defensive purposes in naval warfare. The question which is before the House to-day is simply whether the proposition as embodied in the policy of the government and as embodied in the Bill is one which can fairly recommend itself to the people of the country. In the first place, my right hon. friend has referred to the resolution of March, 1909. I distinctly understood from the clear terms of that resolution that any proposal of this government should follow the suggestions of the admiralty made in the year 1907, and I say without the slightest hesitation that in

the most important respect of all, the control of the naval forces of the empire in time of war, the Bill of the government absolutely departs from the suggestions of the admiralty and therefore absolutely departs from the resolution unanimously agreed to in this House in 1909. What was the suggestion of Lord Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty, on that occasion? The suggestion—indeed it was more than a suggestion, it was an absolute declaration—was that, so far as the naval forces are concerned, there must be unity of control in time of war. It does not require experience, it does not require naval knowledge to understand that in time of war the whole integrity and future of its empire may depend upon that unity of command and control. What did Lord Tweedmouth say in his address to my right hon. friend and the other delegates at the Imperial Conference of 1907? He said this:

I have only one reservation to make, and in making it I ask that, as we have proved ourselves successful in the past, you should put your trust in us now. The only reservation that the admiralty desire to make is, that they claim to have the charge of these strategical questions which are necessarily involved in naval defence, to hold the command of the naval forces of the country, and to arrange the distribution of ships in the best possible manner to resist attack and to defend the empire at large, whether it be our own islands or the dominions beyond the seas. We thoroughly recognise that we are responsible for that defence. We want you to help us in that defence. We want you to give us all the assistance you can, but we do not come to you as beggars; we gladly take all that you can give us, but at the same time, if you are not inclined to give us the help that we hope to have from you, we acknowledge our absolute obligation to defend the King's dominions across the seas to the best of our ability.

Could there be anything more definite, specific or emphatic than that declaration? But that is not all. Let us take the declaration of Mr. McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty at the recent Defence Conference, to be found in the English State paper brought down, pages 21, 22 and 23 (Canadian Bluebook pp. 23 and 25).

If the problem of imperial naval defence were considered merely as a problem of naval strategy, it would be found that the greatest output of strength for a given expenditure is obtained by the maintainance of a single navy with the concomitant unity of training and unity of command. In furtherance, then, of the simple strategical ideal, the maximum of power would be gained if all parts of the empire contributed, according to their needs and resources, to the maintainance of the British navy.

Further on he said:

If the fleet unit maintained by a Dominion is to be treated as an integral part of the imperial forces, with a wide range of interchangeability among its component parts with those forces, its general efficiency should be the same, and the facilities for refitting and replenishing His Majesty's ships, whether belonging to a Dominion fleet or to the fleet of the United Kingdom, should be the same.

And I especially invite the attention of the right hon. gentleman to this:

Further, as it is a sine qua non that successful action in time of war depends upon unity of command and direction, the general discipline must be the same throughout the whole imperial service, and without this it would not be possible to arrange for that mutual co-operation and assistance which would be indispensable in the building up and establishing of a local naval force in close connection with the Royal navy.

I also invite the particular attention of my right hon. friend to what follows.

It has been recognised by the colonial governments that in time of war the local naval forces should come under the general directions of the admiralty.

Not only in 1907 but also in 1909 we have the clearest and most specific statements from men who know infinitely more about these matters than any man in this House, that unity of control and unity of command in time of war are absolutely essential to successful action. There cannot be any question about that. There are many continents in the world, but only one sea. That sea is a great highway. It is the highway of British commerce. It is the highway of the commerce of Canada because the greater part of our exports are sea-borne. It is the highway of the world and especially of the British empire. That sea is one, and it would be absolutely impossible for the different local units of the empire to co-operate successfully under any circumstance, in time of war, unless there was absolute unity of command and direction.

If the right hon. gentleman had spent more time [on section 18 of his Bill, I think he would have better justified the expectation of this House. Clause 18 is as follows:

18. In case of an emergency the Governor in Council may place at the disposal of His Majesty, for general service in the Royal navy, the naval service or any part thereof, any ships or vessels of the naval service, and the officers and seamen serving in such ships or vessels, or any officers or seamen belonging to the naval service.

What is the meaning of that? The plain and direct meaning is that the Governor in Council may refrain from exercising the discretion which is there provided for. If the Government should so refrain what will be the result? Are we to be face to face with the condition which the hon. gentleman says is demanded by our autonomy—that Great Britain being at war we shall declare that we are not at war and that our fleet shall not take any part in it? If the clause does not mean that, I would like to know what it does mean. So far as I can understand the English language, it means just what I have said. I have just this to add, that when, Great Britain being at war, the Governor in Council shall declare that our fleet shall take no part in it—and they may do that simply by inaction, by standing still, by making no order in council—I say that when that occasion comes, then such inaction or declaration will amount virtually to a declaration of that independence to which the right hon. gentleman has aspired.

I have the further objection that unity of organization is not effectually provided for. The Prime Minister of Great Britain used this language in the announcing the results of the Conference:

It was recognised that in building up a fleet a number of conditions should be conformed to. The fleet must be of a certain size, in order to offer a permanent career to the officers and men engaged in the service; the personnel should be trained and disciplined under regulations similar to those established in the Royal navy, in order to allow of both interchange and union between the British and the Dominion services; and with the same object, the standard of vessels and armaments should be uniform.

As a matter of fact, there is no unity of training. The volunteer force to be enrolled in the Canadian navy are to be three-year men; no term of service is fixed by the Bill for the men of the permanent force; and, if I understand rightly the lessons I have endeavoured to learn in regard to naval training, it takes at least six years to make a sailor efficient

in those complicated and mighty engines of war used on the high seas at the present time. So there will be no unity of organization, and apparently there is to be no unity of training, because the officers are to depend for their training, not so much on the British service as on the schools which it is proposed to establish, and I have not observed any very distinct provision in the Bill as to the character of the training which is to be given in those schools.

Now, I would like to read one other extract upon that point. The admiralty most distinctly recommended a fleet unit. It declared:

In the opinion of the admiralty, a Dominion government desirous of creating a navy should aim at forming a distinct fleet unit; and the smallest unit is one which, while manageable in time of peace, is capable of being used in its component parts in time of war.

The fleet unit to be aimed at, should, therefore, in the opinion of the admiralty, consist at least of the following:—

1 armoured cruiser (new 'Indomitable' class which is of the Dreadnought 'type').

3 unarmoured cruisers ('Bristol' class).

6 destroyers.

3 submarines, with the necessary auxiliaries, such as depot and store ships, etc., which are not here specified.

Such a fleet unit would be capable of action not only in the defence of coasts, but also of the trade routes and would be sufficiently powerful to deal with small hostile squadrons should such ever attempt to act in its waters.

Then in paragraph 11:

As the armoured cruiser is the essential part of the fleet unit, it is important that an 'Indomitable' of the 'Dreadnought' type should be the first vessel to be built in commencing the formation of a fleet unit.

On that I would like to remark that Australia accepted at once the proposal for the establishment of a fleet unit and did it under the conditions which I find set out on page 26 of this blue-book in the following words:

The Australian fleet unit should form part of the eastern fleet of the empire to be composed of similar units of the Royal Navy, to be known as the China and East Indies units, respectively and the Australia unit.

So that Australia has not only carried out the recommendations of the admiralty in that regard, but has gone further: it has distinctly declared, if I may rely on the

blue-book, that its fleet unit shall be a part of the Eastern fleet of the empire.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. Will my hon. friend look at the bottom of page 25, where it is said:

When placed by the Commonwealth government at the disposal of the admiralty as in war time, the vessels should be under the control of the naval commander-in-chief.

It would seem as if the commonwealth government had the power to place them under the control of the admiralty or not.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. As far as that is concerned, my position is as distinct as I can make it. I say that any proposals for the establishment of a naval unit of the imperial navy will be absolutely useless, and worse than useless—I would go further and say dangerous—unless it is expressly stipulated that in time of war there shall be but one navy under one central command and direction. We might repeat in the British navy the history of the 'Invincible Armada,' which was composed of five or six different Armadas of distinct organization, different training, different equipment; and we know what the result was in that case. My right hon. friend referred, for some reason that I could not comprehend, to the adventures and crusade of Peter the Hermit. I could not see the exact line of argument by which he introduced Peter the Hermit, or a great many other things, into his speech; but he could not have given a more apt illustration of the argument I am making. What was the cause of the failure of that crusade? The fact that it was composed of a heterogeneous assemblage of men of different countries, without any unity of organization, without any unity of training, without any unity of command; and the same result which befel the crusade of Peter the Hermit would be likely to befall the navies of the empire, if they should be organized on any such basis as that which my right hon. friend has proposed to the House.

What further does the right hon. gentleman propose? He proposes that we should build a certain number of cruisers of the Bristol type and of some other type. What will these

cruisers amount to as an effective fighting force in time of war? At the highest you might say they will be commerce protectors. They might be useful as scouts, or be of some advantage to this country in protecting our fisheries. But what would be the result in time of war? I will tell my right hon. friend what the result would be. An Australian or New Zealand Dreadnought would be called on to protect these Canadian cruisers from attack by the enemy. Surely that would not be a very proud position for the people of Canada to occupy in the day of stress and trial.

As far as any effective fighting force is concerned, it is not supplied by any proposals of the government. I believe the empire is confronted with a serious situation. I gave my reasons for that belief a few days ago, and I will not repeat them to-day. I believe that the duty of Canada is not to be occupied in shaping its policy to meet conditions which are largely the creation of my right hon. friend, but rather to do something immediate and effective in order that we may at least stand side by side with the other great dominions of the empire in the day of trial.

Sir, I have another observation to make. We all did agree, at least I did agree, to the resolution of March, 1909, but every man in this House who since that time has given the slightest consideration to this question will realize that when we talked about the speedy organization of a Canadian naval unit of the imperial navy—because that is the way I prefer to express it—we were speaking of something that cannot be brought about in less than ten, fifteen or twenty years. Why, my right hon. friend to-day has even a vaguer idea of what he proposes to do than he had in respect of the National Transcontinental railway. I did not like to interrupt him; he was being interrupted a good deal; but there was one question which I should have liked to put to him, and I shall take the liberty of putting it now. He says these vessels are to be built in Canada. I would like to know whether they are to be built in a private shipyard or in a government shipyard? Has the government come to any conclusion in regard to that?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. In a private shipyard.

**Mr. R. L. BORDEN.** Then I will venture to say that when my right hon. friend intimates that a private shipyard capable of constructing these ships and of providing the guns, armament and all the equipment which are the most essential parts of such warships can be established in this country in one year, he convinces me that he has not given very much consideration to the subject. I venture to suggest to the right hon. gentleman that at the very earliest possible moment he should revise his estimate of time in order that he may not incur criticisms of the character which have been justly made in this House with respect to his predictions concerning the National Transcontinental railway, to which I have just alluded.

I was referring to the resolution of 1909. We spoke about a speedy organization of a Canadian naval force. I do not believe that that force or that service can be brought about, can be effectively organized, in less than 15 or 20 years; probably it will take longer. I say to my hon. friend that inasmuch as he cannot do that in less than the time I have mentioned, there is another consideration which I would like to bring to his attention. My hon. friend has some recollection of the attitude he took in 1899 with respect to the participation of this country in the South African war. In the 'Globe' of October 4, 1899, he expressed himself in this way:

As I understand the Militia Act, and I may say that I have given it some study of late, our volunteers are enrolled to be used in the defence of the Dominion. They are Canadian troops, to be used to fight for Canada's defence. There is no menace to Canada, and although we may be willing to contribute troops I do not see how we can do so. Then again how could we do so without parliament granting us the money? We simply could not do anything. In other words we should have to summon parliament.

There was not a very great delay before my hon. friend altered his opinion in that regard, but I should like to interject this observation, that a delay such as that which then occurred might spell ruin to the empire if it took place with regard to the employment of our naval forces. I venture to recall to my right hon. friend the reason which he gave in a speech delivered at Sherbrooke, in the province of Quebec, in the month of January, 1900; that was after he had re-

considered his attitude with regard to the participation of this country in the South African war. His words are as follows:

We believe it is our duty as a British colony to take part in the war, and permit two thousand Canadian volunteers to enlist in the English army and to fight for the mother country. We did it because we believed it our duty to do it, in response to the unanimous sentiments of the people of this country. We are a free country; ours is a constitutional government, and our duty is to put into execution the popular will, and the moment the popular will was known to us we had but the duty to discharge, and we discharged it of our own free will. There was no power to constrain us to act as we did; but in the plenitude of our legislative independence we had the right to reply to the popular will.

I would invite my right hon. friend to-day to respond again to the popular will, and the will of this country to-day is that these different proposals ought to be submitted to the people and the people ought to be permitted to pass upon them before any permanent policy of this kind is engaged in. I think there is a great deal to be said in favour of that course. I am as strong as any man in this country in the belief that it is the duty of Canada to participate upon a permanent basis in the defence of this empire and to do our reasonable share in that regard. But I say that to attempt to force a policy of this kind upon the people of this country without giving them an opportunity to say yea or nay with regard to it, would be one of the worst mistakes that could be made by any man who really favoured that policy. If my right hon. friend was able, in very short metre indeed, in 1899, to respond to the popular will, there seems no reason why he should not to-day be equally ready to respond to the popular will upon this question. What the people of this country want, as far as any man can judge who has observed the currents of public opinion, what the people of this country desire, is immediate and effective aid to the empire, and to have any proposals of a permanent character very carefully considered and matured, as they ought to be considered and matured, before any such policy is embarked upon, because there are a great many considerations that must be taken into account.

There is the consideration, and not an unimportant one, to which I alluded, in speaking on this subject on the 12th of January, as to the voice of this country with regard to matters

of international concern. These matters must be dealt with and considered by the great dominions of the empire before any permanent basis of co-operation by those great dominions in the naval defence of the empire can become thoroughly established. That is a question which must be taken into consideration and must be faced.

Inasmuch as the proposals of the government are weak and ineffective, as they afford no immediate aid and assistance, as they could not be carried out for ten or fifteen years so as to become efficient, I say it would be the proper course to mature more thoroughly those proposals, to take up all matters that concern our relations to the empire in respect to co-operation in imperial defence, and in the meantime to do that which, after all, is the most important thing, stand side by side with the mother country under the conditions which confront her at the present time.

The needs of the empire are before our very eyes to-day. We have the splendid example of the other great dependencies of the empire. Are we of less faith and of less courage than they? Shall an Australian fleet and a New Zealand Dreadnought defend the flag which floats above us while our little cruisers are fleeing helpless before an enemy? I do not so understand the spirit, the intention, or the desire of the Canadian people. I believe they are ready to assume their full share of meeting any peril that shall assail the empire, come when it may. Their hearts and their hands are as strong to will and to dare as were those of their fathers before them, and I do not doubt that, as my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) has eloquently expressed it, the men of French descent in this country will be as prompt and ready to do their share with the English-speaking citizens of Canada, as they have proved themselves in days gone by. Thus, let our aid be prompt and generous, so that it may bring to the motherland the assurance not only of material support but of a courage, a faith and a determination which shall proclaim alike to friend and foe that whether in peace or war, the empire is one and undivided.

I therefore move:

That all the words after the word 'that' be left out and the following substituted therefor:—

The proposals of the government do not follow the suggestions and recommendations of the admiralty and, in so far as they entitle the government to withhold the naval forces of Canada from those of the empire in time of war, are ill-advised and dangerous.

That no such proposals can safely be accepted unless they thoroughly ensure unity of organization and of action without which there can be no effective co-operation in any common scheme of empire defence.

That the said proposals while necessitating heavy outlay for construction and maintenance will give no immediate or effective aid to the empire and no adequate or satisfactory results to Canada.

That no permanent policy should be entered upon, involving large future expenditures of this character, until it has been submitted to the people and has received their approval.

That in the meantime the immediate duty of Canada and the impending necessities of the empire can best be discharged and met by placing without delay at the disposal of the Imperial authorities, as a free and loyal contribution from the people of Canada, such an amount as may be sufficient to purchase or construct two battleships or armoured cruisers of the latest Dreadnought type, giving to the admiralty full discretion to expend the said sum at such time and for such purposes of naval defence as in their judgment may best serve to increase the united strength of the empire and thus assure its peace and security.

When Mr. Borden concluded the reading of his amendment the Conservative members rose to their feet, cheered vigorously and sang

"GOD SAVE THE KING."